

From frustration to flashpoint
Violence and incivility against urban bus drivers
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FROM FRUSTRATION TO FLASHPOINT

Violence and Incivility Against Urban Bus Drivers

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OUTLINE

- Context
- Research project
- Focus group themes
- Observation study
- Descriptive criminology
- Prevention perspectives
- Conclusions





CONTEXT



- Considerable research on workplace health and safety (Duffy & McGoldrick 1990), with some attention to violence in the workplace especially for frontline workers (Mayhew & Chappell 2001).
- Some examination of crime on public transport in the UK and USA (Burrell 2007, Newton 2004, Loukaitou-Sideris 1999) but no studies on bus driver violence in Australia (cf taxis and trains).
- Those working in the transport sector are more than twice as likely to be assaulted and nearly four times as likely to be threatened, ranking higher than workers in security, protective services and social support fields (Budd 2001).
- Yet, overall victimisation rates are said to be low but this is based on limited reporting and little knowledge about the levels of aggression and patterning of offences.

MEDIA EXAMPLES

A 30-year-old driver was smacked in the face as a young man got off the bus at Surfers Paradise Boulevard about 1pm (GCB 14/12/11).

The most recent [attack was] when a 38-year-old male driver was punched in the face by a young woman at Miami (GCB 15/2/12).

A pregnant 16-year-old girl spat on a bus driver before kneeling him in the groin (GCB 15/7/12).

Not long into the trip he noticed one was scratching graffiti on a window and stopped the bus to ask the man to leave. The man left the bus but his two friends followed the driver back to his seat where they aggressively demanded a refund and spat in his face. One then dragged the driver off the bus, bashed him and ran (GCB 13/2/13).

The problem has become so widespread many drivers have left the job and others fear for their daily safety (GCB 16/11/12).

Bus drivers admitted to constantly looking over their shoulders and worrying about when the next violent attack would happen (GCB 10/5/13).

MEDIA EXAMPLES

Increased police presence ... after two disturbing attacks on drivers in just two days (GCB 15/2/12).

The Gold Coast bus company will spend an estimated \$1 million on a new security contract in a bid to curb violence (GCB 9/12/11)

Police will this week swarm buses across the city in a bid to protect terrified drivers who fear for their safety in the wake of eight attacks across the Gold Coast in a month (GCB 15/2/12).

The Transport Workers Union revealed there had been 14 assaults on Gold Coast bus drivers so far this year (GCB 9/12/11).

A transport source is aware of 22 serious incidents on Coast bus runs in the past 18 months, ranging from drivers being verbally abused, to spat upon or assaulted (GCB 24/11/12).

RESEARCH PROJECT

- Systematic literature review and consultations → scoping paper and presentation to industry and government → federal funding for year long study.
- Concerned with nature and extent of aggression, antecedents and consequences, and evaluating crime prevention techniques.
- Methodological components:
 - Focus groups with drivers
 - Interviews with industry stakeholders
 - Observational study using web-based tool
 - Analyses of existing incident reports and CCTV
 - Surveys of drivers regarding victimisation

INDUSTRY PARTNERS

Researchers in Business – Enterprise Connect – Australian Government



FOCUS GROUP THEMES



OBSERVATION STUDY

Bus Incident Reporting System

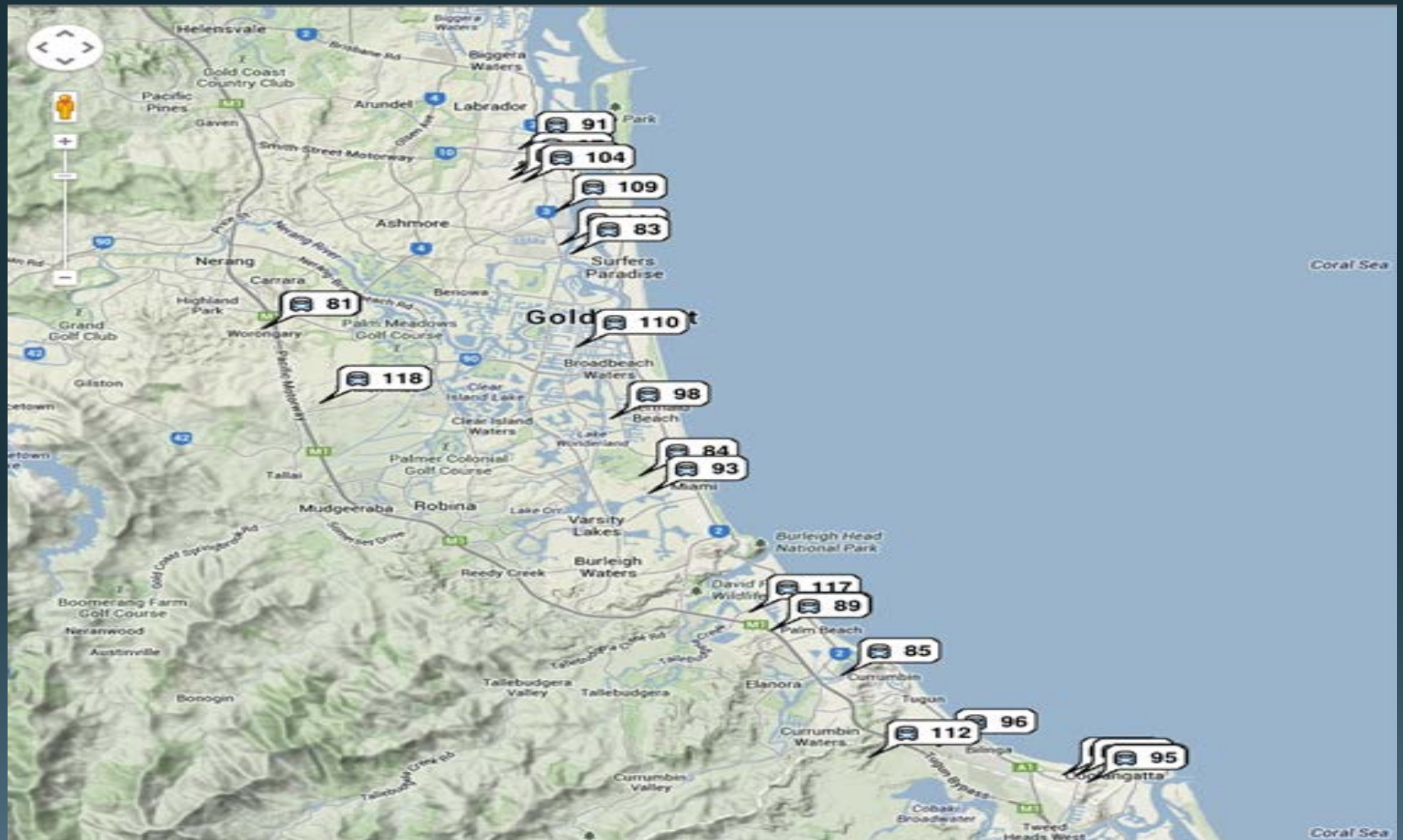


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Total Incidents: 63. Total Trips: 34

Physical		Verbal		Property		Incivility		Road Rage		Participants		Response	
Spat at	0	Name calling	1	Fare evasion	15	Loud language	5	Yelling	0	Driver-pax	13	Talk to pax seated	9
Kicked	0	Accusing	0	Theft	0	Unruly	3	Gestures	0	Driver-motorist	1	Talk to pax standing	1
Slapped	0	Arguing	3	Missile bus	0	Drunk drugged	4	Horn	1	Pax-pax	2	Approached pax	0
Punched	0	Threatening	0	Missile bus damage	0	Antagonistic	0	Damage to bus	0	Pax-general	2	Physically intervened	0
Stabbed	0			Hit bus	0	Hate racial	1	Disrupt service	0			Called ops	0
Robbed	0			Hit bus damage	0							Security attended	0
Missile	0			Internal damage	0							Trip terminated	1
Biological	0			Graffiti vandalism	0								

OBSERVATION STUDY



DESCRIPTIVE CRIMINOLOGY



- Unprotected cash handling procedures



- Exterior door release with accessible design

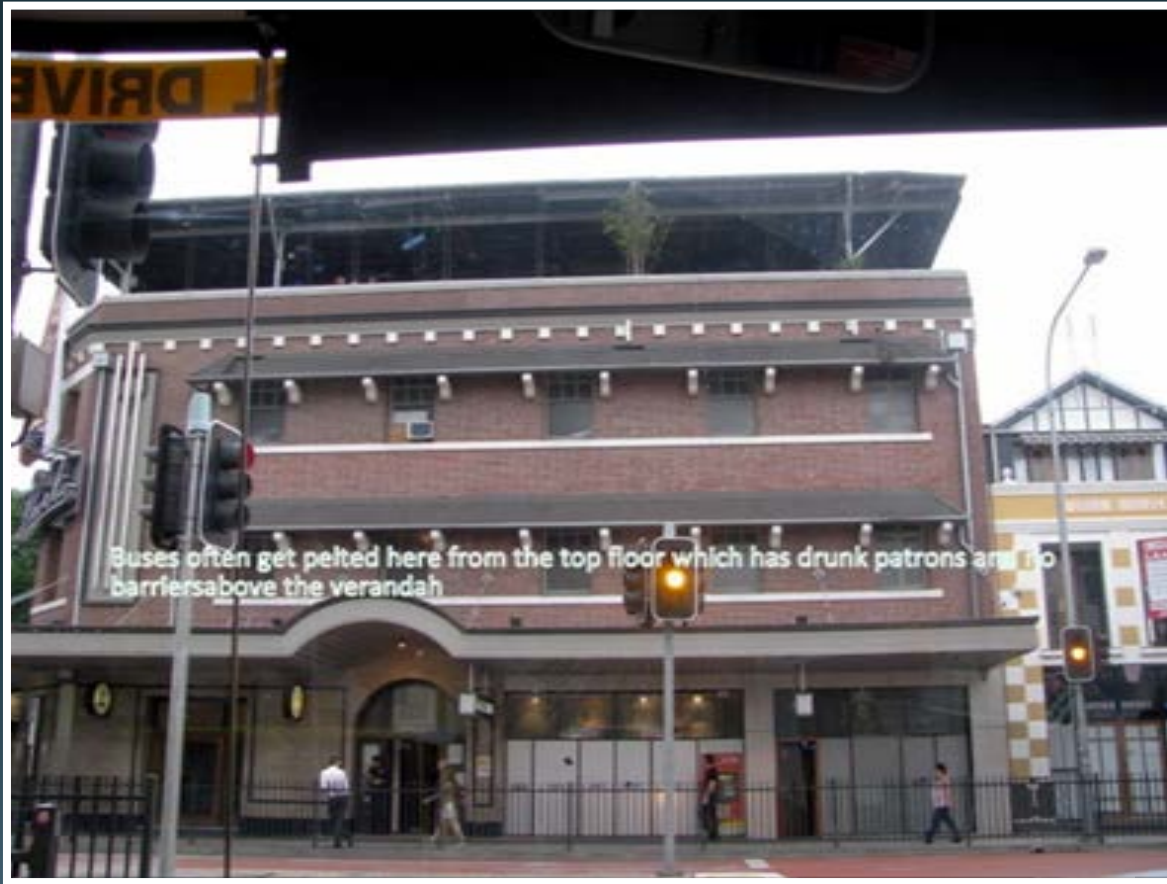


- Isolated stop for driver meal and rest breaks



Stonings happen regularly here. They hide in the maze of shrubbery

- Rock throwing site concealed behind hedge



- Hot spot for drivers from drunken patrons



PREVENTION PERSPECTIVES

MOTIVATING FEATURES	ENABLING STRUCTURES
Reduced effort	e.g. open access to driver, mobile environment
Low risks	e.g. limited security, isolation
Rewards	e.g. cash on hand, unprotected personal belongings
Provocations	e.g. ticketing, tight time schedules, overcrowding
Excuses	e.g. 'no child left behind', attitude towards drivers

AGGRESSION EXAMPLES

TYPE	ACTION
Physical abuse	stabbed, punched, kicked, spat at, robbed, missiles thrown, sprayed with liquids
Verbal abuse	name calling, accusing/blaming, arguing, threatening
Incivility	drunkenness, boisterousness, fare evasion, unauthorised passenger entry
Road rage	minor (name calling, gestures) to serious (assault, attack bus, threats)
Property damage	missiles (rocks/eggs), passengers hitting/kicking bus with skateboards/feet, damage to bus parts

PREVENTION TECHNIQUES

GOAL	STRATEGY	INSTRUMENT/ POLICY	DRIVER OPINIONS
Increase effort	target harden	screens	not comfortable, interrupt interaction, may aid offender
Reduce risk	security guards, ID offenders, equip/skill drivers	CCTV, duress alarms, spit kits, training	not always available, personal surveillance, reactive, on-board guardians preferred
Reduce rewards	reduce/remove cash	go-card system	little change to cash handling, larger denominations, crime attractor, fewer interactions
Reduce provocations	reduce driver/passenger stress and frustration	bus info boards, consultive committees	not read, cannot read, inaction, lip service, drivers are time poor
Remove excuses	information, awareness	signage	no warnings re abuse, too many signs, school program success



CONCLUSIONS



- Aggression against bus drivers is correlated with a suite of factors inherent to this occupational group and the settings in which they work. These include: isolation, low levels of guardianship, overcrowding, late running and friction around fare and ticketing issues – drivers have few spatial and temporal choices.
- The result is high stress levels with poor physical and mental health outcomes, and the potential for physical and verbal abuse. Reportability is low (perhaps ten percent), especially for less serious offences and general incivility.
- Physical assaults on drivers appeared to peak in 2011-12 on the Gold Coast but incidents have declined over past year (cf security cars and guards).



CONCLUSIONS

- Most interventions have been “reactive” such as CCTV, spit-kits, self-defence training and duress alarms.
- There are design options such as the double-step protection on train emergency stop buttons (see Napper et al, 2013).
- Cash-handling interactions have been reduced with the introduction of the Go-Card but there are still potential problems (larger denominations, frequent on-board top-ups).
- To be continued ... observations, mapping, incident analyses, interviews and surveys.

THANK YOU

Comments and
questions please!

